



Milwaukee County

Supervisor Johnny L. Thomas, 18th District

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TAKING CONTROL OF MILWAUKEE COUNTY'S ECONOMIC DESTINY

Supervisor Thomas spearheads Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Milwaukee County

Milwaukee, WI – Now, more than ever, a comprehensive economic development strategy (CEDS) is necessary for Milwaukee County. That's why I have authored a resolution to more clearly define Milwaukee County's mission and goals as they relate to economic development. My resolution raises the bar in regional collaboration and a commitment to transforming the economic future of Milwaukee County, and I am pleased the County Board has endorsed this resolution.

First and foremost, Milwaukee County seeks to be a bold catalyst through which equally ambitious and sustainably-balanced projects come to fruition for the benefit of all individuals. Additionally, we will instill public confidence through transparency, efficiency and accountability in the work of guiding resources toward major economic development projects.

This approach is long overdue. To my knowledge, Milwaukee County has never had a long-term plan for economic development. We now have a significant opportunity to gain control of our economic destiny. Milwaukee County, business leaders, the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC), labor unions and other stakeholders shall prepare a comprehensive strategic development plan that includes detailed information concerning the following:

- **Airport** – The fastest growing airport in the nation. This airport brings large amounts of commerce to our community and connects Milwaukee to the world. We must leverage this connection to create even more economic opportunity.
- **Transportation** – Between 40,000 and 60,000 people have lost access to jobs. We must restore what was cut from our once vibrant transit system. Mass Transit is the key to economic development, and we must do everything we can to improve it.
- **Water** – We need to do a better job of letting employers know that Milwaukee County is within the Lake Michigan watershed and provides an advantage in having access to this prime natural resource.

- Study organization – The plan purpose could include improving business retention, increasing business attraction, enhancing entrepreneurial development, and achieving greater equity in employment and income across the County.
- Analysis of Economic Trends – This should include detailed study of our population, labor force, income and education characteristics, and the structure of the County’s economy, including identifying economic clusters or industry concentrations. Regional, State and national economic trends will also be reviewed.
- Existing Economic Development Efforts - On a day-to-day-basis, a variety of agencies, organizations and institutions are already carrying out economic development activities. Work programs of neighborhood-based organizations, business groups, universities, local governments and regional organizations should also be analyzed.

We have all of these assets, but we are not utilizing them at their highest potential. By creating a real strategy, we will finally be able to draw down federal funds to help facilitate our job growth efforts.

We need to create careers, not just jobs. I envision a Milwaukee County where employees can work hard and advance up the career ladder. This is about both creating – and retaining – family supporting employment in Milwaukee County. We must better compete with peer cities in attracting quality employers.

Milwaukee County is, by far, the biggest economic engine in this state. There are more than 3,000 counties in the U.S. We are the 44th most populous county in the nation, 7th biggest in the Midwest, and largest in Wisconsin. We have economic muscle, and we intend to flex these muscles.

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